Tells the Facts and Names the Names

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Friendly Fire: Gulf War Syndrome and How It Began

There would be no stone left unturned, President Clinton assured Americans on Veterans Day, six days after his re-election, in efforts to get to the bottom of the array of illnesses colloquially known as gulf war syndrome. In his next breath Clinton heaped praise on the presidential advisory committee on the matter, whose prime finding, leaked three days earlier, had been that there is no gulf war syndrome and that any adverse symptoms associated with the name can be attributed to psychological stress experienced by the vets.

George Bush's determination to punish Iraq led to the gulf war illnesses, but Clinton has been responsible for the cover-up of how those illnesses developed. Shortly after Veterans Day, Hillary Clinton told an audience at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas that one of her priorities in the second term will be to work on issues related to these gulf war illnesses. Indeed it was Hillary who pushed for the creation in the spring of 1995 of the same presidential panel that eventually laid the blame on stress, the relief of which is now the First Lady's therapeutic project.

The draft report of the presidential commission can hardly be called scientific, since the results of 100 epidemiological studies that the panel commissioned have not yet been processed. In other words, the only stones not left unturned by Clinton are those now used to conceal what happened in 1991.

Another initial finding of the presidential commission is highly pertinent. The nine-person panel said emphatically that the Pentagon cannot be trusted to investigate itself. The panel called for an independent probe of whether Allied forces in the Gulf in 1991 had been exposed to chemical and biological weapons. Previous Pentagon investigations, they wrote, "have lacked vigor, fallen short on investigative grounds and stretched credibility". Clinton gave this recommendation short shrift, saying that he believed Defense Secretary Bill Perry "has moved in an expeditious fashion". Clinton endorsed the Pentagon's position that it alone has the technical expertise to exhume the truth in this affair.

From the very first moment, back in 1991, when the possibility of chemical and biological weapons' (CBW) deployment was raised, the Pentagon has denied that such weapons were ever used, that troops were ever exposed, that there are illnesses associated with Iraq's chemical/biological arsenal of weaponry. In marked contrast, Czech CBW experts who were part of the Allied force notified Schwartzkopf's hq on January 19, 1991, two days after the initial bombing of Baghdad, that they had detected two chemical "events" near Jubayl. Schwartzkopf's office promptly issued an order to all US commanders to "disregard any reports coming from the Czechs." On November 10, 1993, the Pentagon admitted in a congressional hearing that it believed the Czech report to be valid. When asked why the army had not investigated the "events" reported by the Czechs as a possible source of the syndrome, Major General Ronald Blanck, commander of the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, said this was not explored because "it was the position of military intelligence that such exposure never occurred".

But the US army had more than the Czechs to contend with. US chemical alarm systems had gone off nine times during the war, most significantly on

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January 28 when Major Stephen B. Leisenring reported a low-level chemical cloud that set off "twelve alarms in a conventional downwind pattern". His superiors dismissed this observation as "a false positive". The final fallback position was enunciated by the late Les Aspin, Clinton's first Defense Secretary. In November 1993, Aspin said that the detection of chemical and biological agents in the Gulf "is totally unrelated to the mysterious health problems that have victimized some of our veterans".

Aspin's posture remained that of the Pentagon until June of this year, when a CIA analyst, Larry Fox, discovered that the US army had destroyed as many as 1,000 Iraqi missiles loaded with the nerve gas sarin and with mustard gas at Khamisiyah. The army admitted this but claimed that only 400 engineers might have been exposed. That estimate has now climbed to 20,000.

But even the 20,000 figure is relatively modest in comparison with CIA estimates that as many as 100,000 troops may have been exposed to sarin after Allied bombing missions destroyed Iraqi weapons plants west of Baghdad. The CIA reckoned that as many as 20 metric tons of sarin had been released into the air. The CIA documents pinpointing this and other chemical and biological exposures of US troops were placed on the Internet on November 3 by two analysts formerly under contract to the CIA. That Internet site was disabled two days later, presumably by Agency hackers.

US chemical alarm systems went off nine times during the war, but military officials dismissed these as "false positives".

Aside from the matter of cover-ups during and after the gulf war, there's no doubt whatsoever that Pentagon officials were well aware in advance of the Allied mission to the Gulf that there was a distinct possibility the Iraqis would use chemical and biological weapons. One reason for their foresight was that the Iraqis had used nerve gas against the Kurds and had used biological agents against Majnoon Island in the war against Iran.

The Pentagon was also aware that vital ingredients for these weapons had been supplied by US corporations in a secret export drive supported by both the US and British governments. Chiefly involved here were lewisite, an ammonia-like vesicant used in nerve weapons such as sarin, soman, tobun and VX. So far as biological weapons were concerned, there were approved US sales to Iraq of anthrax, botulism, histoplasm capsulatum (causing a tuberculosis-type disease), brucella melitensis (a bacterium that causes chronic fatigue), clostridium perfringens (a bacterium causing gas gangrene), plus numerous shipments of E. coli. Hundreds of such approved shipments in the mid to late 1980s were recorded by the US Department of Commerce. One of the more bizarre features of some of the gulf war illnesses is that they appear to be transmittable through sexual contact. More than 20,000 spouses and partners of gulf war vets have reported experiences of such symptoms as chronic fatigue, menstrual irregularities, rashes, joint and muscle pain, memory loss. Transmission by biological agents could help explain such reports.

As early as August 1990 the Defense Department was preparing to inoculate US troops and support personnel with vaccines designed to counteract nerve gases, botulism and anthrax. But there was no known antidote against sarin, tobun and VX nerve agents. Anecdotal evidence had suggested to DoD scientists that pyridostigmine bromide (PB) might be effective against soman. PB had been approved by the FDA only for treatment of people suffering from myasthenia gravis, a fatal deterioration of the muscles. The drug had never been widely tested on healthy humans.

The Defense Department was warned by its own scientists that PB should never be used when people might be exposed to sarin, since it would merely magnify the latter's potency. Use of PB under any circumstances would also produce severe side effects. There were 35 experiments with the drug with US service people before the gulf war. Observed side effects included nausea, vomiting, slowed heart rate, diarrhea, increased salivation, increased bronchial secretions and pupil constrictions.

In one of the first tests of the drug on a USAF pilot, the man suffered cardiac arrest almost immediately. After that incident army researchers said in August of 1990 that PB should not be used by individuals with "asthma, peptic ulcers, liver, kidney, heart disease or hypersensitivity to PB and related drugs". Another memo prepared by DoD medical researchers in the same month said that "because of the side effects associated with PB, all subjects will be admitted to Lyster Army Hospital as inpatients so that they will be medically monitored during periods of testing. A drug will be available at the test site to counteract the possible side effects."

On top of that, the DoD had been warned by James Moss, a researcher working for the US Department of Agriculture, that when PB is used in combination with organo-phosphates the toxicity of both chemicals significantly increases. Moss's research focused on

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Foot-in-Mouth Outbreak

Pundits' Clouded Crystal

With the landslide victory of Bob Dole the GOP appears to have regained its virtual lock on the White House. The overwhelming defeat of Bill Clinton left the Democrats desperately searching for answers ...

Oops, wrong story. That's the one that would have been written if the nation's pundits had been correct in their analysis of the November 1994 mid-term elections. Back then, the conventional wisdom was that Clinton's chances for a second term were practically zero and that the most commanding politician on the scene was new House Speaker Newt Gingrich.

The pundits, of course, were matchlessly wrong. Clinton easily won re-election and Gingrich today is perhaps the most reviled figure in American politics.

The 1994 election itself revealed the pundits' feeble powers of prophecy. Of 14 political insiders assembled by *The Washington Post* two days before that vote, just three predicted that the GOP would take control of Congress. The near total failure to prognosticate the "Republican Revolution" did not deter the pundits from dashing to their crystal balls in the days following the mid-term vote. Nor were the beltway experts troubled by the fact that they were reading the national tea leaves on the basis of a mid-term turnout rate of just 38 percent.

As soon as the 1994 ballots had been counted, the pundits decreed that the Republican triumph represented a turning point in American politics. A *Wall Street Journal* editorial triumphantly declared that the American people had produced "the rest of the revolution President Reagan initiated back in 1980. ... You can bet there is going to be 'change' in American politics." Richard Brookhiser of *The National Review* concurred, writing in a *New York Times* op-ed article that the voters had "set in motion the second stage of the Reagan Revolution, which will make the one-term Presidencies of George Bush and Bill Clinton seem like political hiccups".

Gingrich, who now enjoys a national approval rating of 19 percent, less than Nixon's at the height of the Watergate scandal, was portrayed by the pundits as a master tactician and political genius. Writing in *The New York Times*, William Safire said that "Bill Clinton remains President of the United States for foreign affairs but the center of power in domestic affairs ... has shifted from the White House" to Gingrich. Safire predicted a string of quick legislative triumphs for "Newt the Beaut" — none of which materialized. Syndicated columnist George Will wrote that "the revolution due to begin in January with a bang of Speaker Gingrich's gavel may indeed involve greater change than Washington has seen since the New Deal."

At *Newsweek*, one-time Clinton brown-noser Howard Fineman heaped praise on the new House Speaker. "Three days after the Republican right shook the nation, if not the world, their theoretician-in-chief was back in the capitol," he wrote, employing the hagiographic prose style normally reserved for winning presidential candidates. "Surrounded by books and models of dinosaurs (he once wanted to be a paleontologist), gazing contentedly at the panorama of monuments on the Mall, Newt was examining every detail. No item was too personal, no goal too sweeping."

According to the pundits, the GOP's victory had a powerful ideological component. A *Washington Post* editorial said, "The change called for went almost uniformly in one direction, and that was against liberalism and toward the right." R.W. Apple of *The New York Times* said that "the message from the electorate was

Texaco's Love of Opera

Texaco is currently beleaguered by unfortunate publicity following disclosure of racist comments by its senior corporate executives, along with plans to destroy evidence, secretly recorded while discussing a civil rights suit against the oil company by some of its employees. One of its vice presidents has now been indicted by the feds for obstruction of justice in connection with the same lawsuit, which was settled in mid-November for $175 million.

This is not the first time that the oil giant, headquartered in White Plains, NY, has been on the receiving end of public contumely. In 1940 it came to light that Texaco was breaching the US embargo against shipments of oil to Hitler's Germany. Texaco was sending oil via a cut-out corporation. There was much public clamor and indignation, and the company's top brass brooded on ways to winch the corporate name out of the mud.

They phoned the great pr man, Ben Sonnenberg Sr. After a moment's reflection he advised them to sponsor weekly broadcasts, every Saturday, from the Metropolitan Opera House. Texaco arranged sponsorship forthwith. Soon gratified opera fans were humming along with arias from Bizet, though probably not Wagner. Texaco simultaneously began sponsorship of Milton Berle's tv show, with its imperishable corporate jingle, "You can trust your car to the man who wears the star." The opera broadcasts continue to this day.

In the 1930s, Texaco was run by a Norwegian-American named Torkild Rieber, who was openly pro-Nazi. Under Rieber's leadership Texaco was the first US oil company to send fuel to General Franco's Nationalist forces during the Spanish Civil War. When Roosevelt imposed an embargo on such shipments Rieber swiftly made deals with Mussolini to sell oil to Italy, and transport some of these cargoes to Germany.

In 1940 Rieber was denounced by a mid-level Texaco executive as being "pro-Nazi and openly boasting of it as well as being willing to do all within [his] power to injure the English and help the Germans". When these stories began to trickle into the press, Rieber said he considered selling oil to the fascists to be good business. It was this contretemps that provoked the storm Sonnenberg was recruited to dissipate. Eventually Texaco's board decided Rieber had outlived his usefulness and fired him. Texaco CEO James Moffett wrote to the president of Standard Oil of California, confiding that "firing Rieber was a wise public relations move because of his Nazi associations". He didn't think there "would be any repercussions on our business throughout the British Empire." ■

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They Never Give Up

The co-conspirators behind Contributions Watch – the bogus "watchdog" group set up by the tobacco cartel, exposed in our October 1-15 issue – have a new line of defense. The two principal players involved in the scandal, Philip Morris and the State Affairs pr firm, now express remorse about having hidden their financial support for the Contributions Watch study of trial lawyers' political donations, but insist that the report itself was entirely accurate and that's all that matters.

In a mid-October letter to *The Washington Post*, Philip Morris spokesman David Laufer wrote that the findings of Contributions Watch stand "unchallenged. ...It's a story readers ought to hear." In fact, the methodology Contributions Watch employed in its study is as bogus as the group itself. In toting up political contributions, Contributions Watch tallied every dollar from Political Action Committees and individuals from law firms that "primarily" consist of trial lawyers, even if those firms have significant non-trial business.

Contributions Watch says trial lawyers in Ohio made political donations of $3.1 million, of which $1.1 million came from the law firm of Climaco, Climaco, Seminatore, Lefkowitz & Garafoli. That firm, which has more than 50 lawyers, does far more than simply trial work. Indeed, Kenneth Seminatore, who Contributions Watch lists as his company's second-largest single donor, is the lead attorney for Blue Cross of Ohio. He billed Blue Cross millions of dollars last year for advice on how to push through a proposed merger with Columbia/HCA Healthcare Corp, over the opposition of consumer groups. State Affairs, co-creator of Contributions Watch, is retained by national Blue Cross to offer advice on similar issues.

Contributions Watch lists Michael Climaco as his firm's single biggest political contributor. But Climaco performs almost no trial work; he is the firm's managing director. Such shoddy research became the basis for big media stories, including a *Weekly Standard* article that declared the Contributions Watch study had proved that trial lawyers are "the most powerful special interest group in American politics". ■

disgust with big government and impatience with government activism."

Thomas Edsall echoed these assessments in the *Post*: "From the start of his administration, when he allowed the public agenda to be dominated by the issue of gays in the military, through rejection of his $20 billion stimulus bill ... to administration insistence on gender and racial diversity in appointments, to the proposal of a health care plan that increasingly looked like a new liberal redistribution initiative, Clinton in office steadily lost the strengths of the campaigner and took on the image of a liberal."

There was scant evidence to support such viewpoints. One major poll of voters conducted after the 1994 election found that 57 percent of respondents agreed that "it is the responsibility of the government to take care of people who can't take care of themselves"; 69 percent concurred that "we have important problems to solve that the government must play a bigger role to help solve." Only 6 percent said their vote had been meant as a warning to liberals, just 1 percent higher than those who were sending a warning to Republicans. Edsall somehow failed to note that every one of the sinister post-election "lunges to the left" he toted up had been a Clinton campaign promise.

Many pundits argued that Clinton had been so weakened by the mid-term vote that Al Gore might well replace him as his party's standard bearer in 1996. "So sweeping was the Democratic defeat in the election ... that the president's place at the head of the ticket two years from now is no longer taken for granted," the *Times*'s Apple wrote in a front-page article less than two weeks after the vote. Apple predicted that at a minimum Clinton was "likely to face the kind of distraction that President Bush endured from Patrick Buchanan two years ago, and perhaps a more serious fight of the kind that Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts gave President Carter in 1980".

Other experts soon rushed to join the herd. Lobbyist Ted van Dyck was quoted in the press as saying that Clinton would "come under increasing pressure early in 1995 to declare that he is not a candidate for re-election ... As he considers the unpleasant alternatives, he will take [this notion] seriously." Stephen Hess of the Brookings Institution told one reporter that Clinton was a "possibility to be the first incumbent president since Chester A. Arthur in 1884 to be denied the nomination".

If Clinton did manage to win his party's nomination, no one believed he had a chance of beating the Republican nominee, whoever it was. At the *Post*, David Broder cited a post-election poll that had Clinton losing to Dole by 45 to 39 percent, and said that an analysis of the returns "demonstrates even more clearly ... how the electoral odds have tipped against Clinton". Broder said that only 11 of the 32 states that Clinton won in 1992 looked solid for '96, with another eight "too close to call". When the votes came in a few weeks ago, Clinton had won 31 states and 379 electoral votes, more than he had four years ago. (Broder had wagered that Clinton would have trouble carrying even traditionally Democratic states such as Massachusetts, New York and Illinois, which he ended up winning by margins of 34, 28 and 17 percent, respectively.)

According to the experts, there was little that Clinton could do to reverse the political situation. Those who expected the Republicans to "lurch into extremism" and thereby discredit themselves were "daydreaming", according to James Carney of *Time*. Before long, Gingrich came out in favor of warehousing welfare kids in orphanages, an assault weapon in every pot and letting Medicare "wither on the vine". The GOP's popularity dropped precipitously and Newt never recovered.

The emerging analysis of the '96 vote looks to be as flawed as the pundits' conclusions from two years ago. The experts insist that Clinton won because of his many moves to the right, such as his signature on the monstrous GOP welfare bill. The polls show that this was far less important to Clinton's backers than the (misguided) perception that the president was stronger than Dole and the GOP when it came to issues such as education,

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(Gulf Syndrome, cont. from p. 2)
diethyltoluamide, a chemical familiar to many American campers, particularly on the Outer Banks and in the Upper Midwest as DEET, the active ingredient in anti-mosquito preparations. It's in the kitchen spray Raid too.

Moss found that when DEET is used in combination with PB, the former becomes seven times as toxic as when it is used by itself. PB becomes four times as toxic, Moss also found, when it is used in combination with DEET. In the gulf war the Allied forces widely used DEET and its chemical relatives against sandflies, mosquitoes and scorpions. The chemicals were rubbed on the skin, sprayed in the air and saturated on tents. Moreover, all of the uniforms issued to gulf war personnel were impregnated with permethrin, a pesticide made by Dow. Permethrin has been found to double the toxicity both of DEET and of PB. The same trend was found with other pesticides used in the war, including lindane, widely used as a treatment for lice.

The patent on DEET is co-owned by the USDA with the S.C. Johnson Co., also known as Johnson Wax, which manufactures it under license. Most of the pesticides now in use in US agriculture were developed in US CBW programs.

At a 1994 hearing before the senate veterans affairs committee, Moss testified on the toxic combo of PB and DEET. Soon thereafter he sent a fax to S.C. Johnson expressing his concern. Two days later USDA officials called in Moss and told him to quit his research, and keep quiet about his findings. "If I was to talk about my ideas about DEET toxicity", Moss told reporters, "I [understood that] I could have trouble finding a job and could be blackballed." In an attempt to create a paper trail and to protect himself as a whistleblower, Moss detailed these attempts to censor his research in internal memos to his superiors. That same summer Moss's research contract with the USDA expired and his eight-year term with the department came to a summary end. The director of Moss's laboratory at the USDA said Moss had not been renewed because he had engaged in unauthorized research.

In an effort to protect Moss, Senator Jay Rockefeller wrote to then USDA Secretary Mike Espy in May, June and July of 1994, trying to save Moss's job and to ensure funding for his research. Espy didn't answer till Moss's warnings had been aired on CBS News on October 14 of that year. And then Espy merely said that the USDA would not continue this line of inquiry, but would transfer all of Moss's data to the Department of Defense.

Aside from Moss's work, the US army had known as early as 1986 that there was a PB/pesticide connection, and that the two had a mutually and destructively enhancing effect when used in combination. Though most of the relevant documents were destroyed by the army, a memo screening a potential subject for research (an air force pilot called Craig Clark) notes that he was an acceptable candidate because "there is no sensitivity to pesticides or recent significant exposure".

Most of the pesticides used in US agriculture were developed in Chemical Biological Warfare programs.

Contemplating all these warnings (plus one other suggesting that to be effective against soman, PB would have to be used in enormously dangerous amounts) the army made haste to extract from the FDA the relevant waivers to use the vaccine . The FDA initially resisted, citing concerns "about liability". By January 1991, with war imminent, the pressure grew. The DoD threatened to invoke emergency powers that would exempt it from any review by the FDA. The FDA would be without access to army research findings.

In the case of both PB and the botulism vaccine, the FDA finally gave the Defense Department an interim partial waiver from normal restriction on the use of "investigational drugs". This category, known as IND, normally requires written and informed consent from the patient, close scrutiny of the patient's condition, along with compilation of a detailed medical case history.

Even under the FDA's waiver the Defense Department was still supposed to keep individual records on all recipients and records of all reports of adverse reactions. None of these conditions was met.

At the start of January 1991, the US army began administering the three vaccines — PB, anthrax and botulism — on a mandatory basis to as many as 400,000 troops, contractors and journalists. The recipients were given the vaccines without any information on potential side effects. In fact most of the medical personnel administering the vaccines were unaware of the hazards. The vaccines were given to women, some of them pregnant, even though the relevant drugs had never been tested — *still* have not been tested — on healthy women. Nor was there any research on how the vaccines might react with other medications such as birth control pills. In all, 28,000 women were given the vaccines. Unlike the extensive screening given to the research subjects, none of the gulf war personnel were screened for any diseases or conditions. This becomes important. If side conditions are not surveyed, then ensuing ailments cannot be analyzed with adequate case histories.

(Even if the botulism vaccine had been effective, it was given too late to have had any use in the war. The Defense Department didn't begin administering it util January 23, 1991, after the beginning of the air war. None of the recipients of the botulism vaccine received the full

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course — three shots — necessary for full immunization.)

Since the end of the gulf war the Defense Department has aggressively pressured the FDA to issue a permanent waiver of informed consent, saying "not to finalize it provides an arguable defect under the Administrative Procedures Act and leaves the Department of Defense and the FDA open to greater liability." In another bid to eliminate liability the army has told gulf war vets that they have no legal standing because the so-called Feref doctrine prohibits military personnel from suing the federal government for injuries suffered as part of military service.

The DoD cited a decision written by Antonin Scalia in which the US Supreme Court upheld the Feref doctrine, saying — in Scalia's words — that to do otherwise would "call into question military discipline and decision-making".

While the army continues to stonewall here in the US and while Hillary consults her stress-meter, what of other nations in the Allied force in 1991? On November 12 of this year more than 1,000 British vets sued their government claiming that they had been poisoned by a toxic combination of pesticides liberally sprayed on their uniforms and tents and by anti-nerve gas tablets they were compelled to take. To back up their claims the British vets have used a report by Dr. Norman Jones, who was a contractor for the British Defense Ministry. Jones's research shows that some vets were particularly vulnerable to this nerve gas tablet.

Money Changes Everything

With a virtually invisible campaign and fiscal austerity so stringent that he permitted his running partner, Winona LaDuke, to spend only $200, Ralph Nader still managed to attract 480,000 votes nationwide in the presidential ballot on November 5. This placed Nader fourth among the national presidential candidates. In Oregon he racked up 4 percent of the vote. In Portland, Oregon, he got 8.1 percent. In some California counties he got as much as 10 percent.

On November 14 the Federal Elections Commission ruled 5-0 that the Green Party — on whose line Nader was running — could not be accorded the status of a national party. Reason: the Green Party had not raised enough money for Nader's presidential run.

Can there be any better demonstration of the fact that in official American politics money is the only thing that counts? Even though they turned in less impressive vote totals, the Libertarians and the Natural Law Party spent money and thus retained the national party status they had won from the FEC in earlier years. ■

The Czech government has officially recognized gulf war syndrome and announced a couple of weeks ago that it will compensate ailing vets and, most importantly, will allow them to be evaluated by non-military doctors. The French soldiers were not given antidotes and vaccines and have reported no cases of gulf war syndrome.

The US army was involved in a gigantic experiment, with very little idea of the consequences of its vaccines and antidotes.

As the cover-up slowly unravels, it becomes clear that the US army, along with the British Defense Ministry, was involved in a gigantic experiment, with very little idea — despite many dire warnings — of the consequences of its vaccines and antidotes. This may not be contrary to US and British laws, but it certainly violates the Nuremberg Codes promulgated after World War II, in which Nazi scientists had experimented on their victims with the same chemicals and biological materials. Many of those scientists later found employment in US research labs, military and civilian.

One final way to study gulf war syndrome is to look at the health histories of farm workers here in the United States. They are in the front lines all the time, bombed by the pesticides that are the descendants of soman, sarin and tobun. ■

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